

Stamm Farm (Heck-Stamm-Unger Farm)
East side Gruber Road .5 mile south of State Route 183
Mount Pleasant vicinity
Penn Township
Berks County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-266

HABS,
PA,
6-MTPLES.V,
11 -

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

STAMM FARM (Heck-Stamm-Unger Farm)

Location: On east side of Gruber Road (LR06038) .5 miles south of its intersection with State Route 183, about 400' east of Fox Lake bridge over Tulpehocken Creek, about .6 mile southeast of Mount Pleasant, Penn Township, Berks County, Pennsylvania.

USGS Bernville Quadrangle, Universal Transverse
Mercator Coordinates: House 18.410510.4472190
Barn 18.410550.4472150

Present Owner: United States Government

Present Use: Demolished in 1977 for the Blue Marsh Lake project, sponsored by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Significance: This is a good example of a once-prosperous Pennsylvania German family farm that failed to adjust completely to the modernization process that occurred in American agriculture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Consequently, this farmstead offers a glimpse of what a late eighteenth or early nineteenth-century Pennsylvania German farm might have looked like. The house is constructed of load-bearing logs, and the outbuildings are arranged functionally yet sensitively on the landscape. The farm is located in Pleasant Valley, a linear hamlet running between the Gruber Wagon Works and the Pleasant Valley Roller Mill, beside the Union Canal.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: Unknown. The log house would appear to date from the last half of the eighteenth century, but later alterations make the fabric difficult to read. On the first story the logs are mortised into corner and intermediate posts, but on the second story they are dovetailed at the corners. The wattle and daub chinking is an eighteenth-century technique, but the roof shape and slope point to an early nineteenth-century date. The curved doors seem to be eighteenth-century woodwork, but the lath is machine-sawn, not hand split.

STAMM FARM (Heck-Stamm-Unger Farm)
HABS No. PA-266 (Page 2)

The barn was built in about 1860, and the corn crib-wagon shed, first chicken house, and pig barn are of similar vintage. The root cellar and stone superstructure may date from the original construction of the house. The double garage and wash house-butcher shed were built about 1920, while the second chicken house dates from about 1940. The metal brooder house was moved from the old John Dundore farm in about 1942.

2. Architect: None known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The following is an incomplete chain of title for the land on which the house and outbuildings stand. Chain of title information for Berks County is vague and often incomplete, and for this property it was impossible to establish ownership before 1865. It is highly probable, however, that Werner Stamm acquired the land from the Penns about 1700. Reference is to the Office of the Recorder of Deeds, Berks County, except where noted.

- | | |
|------|---|
| 1865 | Deed dated April 4, 1865 unrecorded
Levi S. Stamm and Daniel Billman, Executors of the
estate of John Stamm
to
John Adam |
| 1866 | Deed dated April 3, 1866 recorded September 12, 1879
in Book 132 page 226
John Adam
to
Isaac Heck |
| 1879 | Deed dated September, 1879 unrecorded
Estate of Isaac Heck
to
Adam Dundor |
| 1879 | Deed dated September 13, 1879 recorded February 9 1880
in Book 134 page 240
Adam E. Dundor and Rebecca, his wife
to
Isaac A. Heck |

1907 Deed dated March 16, 1907 recorded March 16, 1907
in Book 342 page 272
Isaac A. Heck and Mary Ann, his wife
to
Charles S. Stamm

1955 Deed dated April 28, 1955 recorded August 2, 1955
in Book 1201 page 512
Charles S. Stamm and Gertrude A., his wife
to
Charles S. Stamm and Gertrude A., his wife

ca. 1960 Charles S. Stamm died, leaving property to Gertrude
A. Stamm, his wife; deed unrecorded.

- 4 Alterations and additions: The extent of the alterations to the house can only be guessed at. If the house is indeed an eighteenth-century structure, the roof is probably not original. The east half of the basement was dug out long after construction, probably about 1870. A central fireplace was removed circa 1830; at the the same time much of the interior was altered, and some original parts re-used. The enclosed porch on the south facade was added about 1925.

The pig barn was moved from in front of the barn to its present location in about 1885. What is important in terms of alterations and additions, however, is what is missing: for example, there is no silo, no metal cattle-feeding apparatus, very little paint on the buildings, and no running water or central heating in the farmhouse.

B. Historic Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

This farm was an integral part of the small linear hamlet running between the Gruber Wagon Works and the Pleasant Valley Roller Mill known as Pleasant Valley. Early maps indicate that this was a tannery. The 1854 Henry and Boyer map labels this "Stamm Tannery" and the 1862 map says "J. Stamm's Tanning Yard." By the the 1876 map, however, this property had changed ownership and was listed simply "Isaac Heck."

Pleasant Valley was strategically located because it ran along the former main road to Reading and paralleled the Union Canal. Besides the tannery it had two small hotels, a mill, several farms, and the Gruber Wagon Works. The Reading to Bernville stage stopped at both hotels in Pleasant Valley, and the canal

boats stopped there regularly to pick up and discharge cargo (the planks and siding in the barn, for example, were delivered by canal boat). After 1881, Pleasant Valley was connected directly to North Heidelberg and Lower Heidelberg Townships by the Fox Lake steel truss bridge (known as the Pleasant Valley bridge before circa 1930) which spanned the Tulpehocken Creek. A smaller wooden bridge once crossed the Union Canal just ahead of this bridge. These transportation links allowed Pleasant Valley to prosper and begin to urbanize. From an overall point of view, however, Pleasant Valley became moribund about 1920. Its survival thus provides a glimpse of what an early Pennsylvania German town might have looked like.

C. Sources of Information

1. Photographs: Fred Dundore, Mt. Pleasant, Pa. has in his possession a set of color photographs taken about 1975 which document the farmstead as it existed just before it was taken for the Blue Marsh Lake project.

2. Maps:

Davis, F. A., Illustrated Historical Atlas of Berks County.
Reading, Pa.: Reading Publishing House, 1876.

Henry and Boyer, Map of Berks County, 1854, in collection
Berks County Historical Society.

Township Map of Berks County Pennsylvania "from actual
Surveys by L. Fagan". Philadelphia, Pa.: H.F. Bridgens,
1862.

3. Interviews:

Mr. and Mrs. Rober Auchenbach, Pleasant Valley, Pa. residents
of Isaac Stamm House (HABS No. PA-112) and long-time
residents of the Pleasant Valley area; August, 1976.

Fred Dundore, Mt. Pleasant, Pa., grandson of last Stamm owner
of the farm; August 10, 1976.

Mr. and Mrs. Paul Unger, Reading, Pa.; Mrs. Unger is the
daughter of the last Stamm owner of the farm, and both
Mr. and Mrs. Unger were long-time residents of the farm;
August 17, 1976.

4. Secondary Sources:

- Arthur, Eric, and Dudley Whitney. The Barn. A Vanishing Landmark in North America. Greenwich, Conn.: New York Graphic Society, 1972, esp. pp 84-113.
- Dornbusch, Charles H., and John K. Heyl. Pennsylvania German Barns. Allentown, Pa.: The Pennsylvania German Folklore Society, Vol. 21, 1958.
- Fox, Cyrus T. Readin and Berks County Pennsylvania, A History. New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1925, 184-185; gives brief Stamm family history.
- Klees, Frederick. Pennsylvania Dutch. NY: MacMillan, 1950.
- Long, Amos, Jr. Th Pennsylvania German Family Farm: A Regional architectural and Folk Cultural Study of an American Agricultural Community. Breinigsville, Pa.: The Pennsylvania German Society, Vol. VI. 1972.
- Meiser, George IX. "Historical Survey of Blue Marsh Project Area." Historical Review of Berks County XXXVI (Summer, 1971), 98-110; general study with a good map of the area
- Moser, Nick. "Penn Township." Reading Sunday Eagle Magazine (December 1, 1957), 1-3.

Prepared by Thomas Kheel
Project Historian
Historic American Buildings
Survey
August, 1976

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: This is a good example of a well-planned ensemble of Pennsylvania German farm buildings found in southeastern Pennsylvania. The farmhouse, a traditionally plain, self-effacing dwelling, is particularly interesting because of its bearing wall, log construction. The barn and outbuildings are of interest because they were planned and constructed according to Pennsylvania German folk culture traditions.
2. Condition of fabric at time of documentation: Very poor salvage rights had been exercised in anticipation of demolition.

B. Description of Exterior of House

1. Overall dimensions: The two-and-a-half-story building measures approximately 32' across its four-bay front by 26' deep.
2. Foundation: The foundation is randomly laid limestone masonry.
3. Wall construction, finish, color: The hand-hewn log walls are chinked with a mud plaster and sheathed with clapboards that have been painted white with green trim.
4. Structural system: Hand-hewn logs are set on top of one another to form massive bearing walls. At the first story, the logs are set into corner and intermediate posts with mortise and tenon joints. At the second story, the corners are dovetailed. Many joints are clearly marked by Roman numerals. The first floor is supported by a wood girder supported by wood columns in the basement. There is no ridge pole in the attic; lapped and pegged joints provided the central roof connection instead.
5. Porch: An enclosed one-story porch measuring about 6' by 18' runs along the south (front) facade. It is frame with a stone foundation, a shed roof, and six windows across the front.

6. Chimneys: Two brick chimneys run just inside the end walls, piercing the roof on center. Both chimneys are set up on wood platforms in the attic and were used to vent metal pipes running from heating stoves on the lower floors.
7. Openings: The door is enclosed within the front porch. All of the windows have two-over-two-light double-hung sash.
8. Roof: The gable roof was originally covered with split wood shingles (the undersides of which are visible from the attic), but is now covered with mineral-surface interlocking asphalt shingles.

B. Description of Interior of House:

1. Floor plans

- a. First floor: The floor plan of this house consists of three rooms on the first floor: kitchen, parlor, and bedroom. Although most Pennsylvania German farmhouses have a three-room first floor plan, this house is unusual because the large kitchen runs the length, rather than the depth, of the house.
 - b. Second floor: The four bedrooms upstairs are located at the corners of the house and are entered directly from a small hallway at the top of the stairs connecting the first and second floors.
2. Stairway: A straight-run stairway beginning in the northwest corner of the kitchen connects the first and second floors.
 3. Flooring: The floors are composed of random-width pine boards and some are covered with linoleum.
 4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls are made of plaster and lath painted pastel colors or covered with old floral-pattern wallpaper. A vertical plank wainscoting surrounds the kitchen.
 5. Doorways: Most of the interior doors are made of wood panels; one of the upstairs bedroom doors has Pennsylvania German patterns carved into it.
 6. Decorative features and trim: All of the doors, baseboards, and woodwork are painted white.

7. Mechanical equipment: The house was never modernized to provide for central heating and running water. Fresh water was obtained from a hand-driven iron pump mounted on a concrete wellhead in front of the house.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The farmhouse faces south and is sited high on a knoll with its west end wall overlooking Gruber Road. The Tulpenhocken Creek and the bed of the now defunct Union Canal lie about 100' west of Gruber Road. The farm is approached by a curving driveway that winds past the garage, up the knoll in front of the house, then past the uphill side of the barn, terminating at the corn crib-wagon shed.
2. Landscape design: As in the case of nearly all Pennsylvania German farms, there was never a professional attempt to design the landscape. The farm exhibits the typical Pennsylvania German sensitivity to the rolling contour of the land, however, with the buildings placed on the land in convenient and visually satisfying ways that take full advantage of the complexities of the site. The house, for example, is sited on the highest spot on the property in order to overlook the workings of the farm and to ensure visual prominence, in general. The barn, moreover, is built into an embankment to allow for multi-story entry and exposure. The site has been well planted with trees, shrubs, and flowers and was very neatly kept until taken for the Blue Marsh Lake project.
3. Outbuildings:
 - a. Barn: The barn is located about 120' south of the farmhouse, and is a good example of a medium sized, Pennsylvania German bank barn. The building is a timber-framed structure sheathed with vertical boards, and measures about 68'-6" by 35'-6". The barn is oriented to the west which helps protect the space below the projecting forebay (also known as the vorbau, vorschuss, overhang, overshoot, or overshoot) from the prevailing northerly winds in the colder months. The forebay also provides shelter for the doors leading into the first

floor of the barn. The barn originally had six doorways, but one was removed when the forebay was partially enclosed on the south end.

The barn is painted red and has faded badly. There is a very elegantly designed segmentally arched window in the gable of each end wall. This window is divided into four lights and flanked by a set of wooden ventilator louvers. The top and bottom of the window are emphasized by simple moldings.

The barn superstructure is constructed of massive, hand-hewn timbers with mortise and tenon joints (a traditional structural system known as Fachwerkbau). Many joints are clearly marked by Roman numerals. Knee braces and angle braces perpendicular to the slope of the rafters support the roof. The roof is covered with slates placed directly on small purlins. The roof is structurally continuous over the forebay.

The plan of the two main floors of the barn is typical of the Pennsylvania German bank barn. The first floor is essentially one continuous floor that was originally subdivided into four sets of stalls serviced by two feed alleys. The second and fifth doors (counting in from the north end wall) are feed entry doors leading to alleys where the animal feed and bedding is transferred from the second floor through "hay holes" to troughs running along each end of the adjoining stalls. The animals entered their stalls through the first, third, fourth, and sixth (now removed because of the forebay enclosure) doors. This is an interesting survival of the traditional first-floor plan. Most Pennsylvania German dairymen have substituted one or two rows of easily serviced metal stanchions running the length of the barn for the multiply entry system. The front wall of the first floor can thus still be entered through any of the five, two-piece, "Dutch" doors plus a door entering the forebay enclosure. The front wall is constructed of wood while the side and rear foundation walls are randomly laid limestone masonry with professionally cut reddish sandstone blocks (probably salvaged from the Union Canal locks about 1900) used as quoins. The interior has been whitewashed and has a partially concreted floor.

The second floor of the barn has two central bays, as entered through two sets of large doors on the uphill side, which were originally used as a threshing floor with partitions between the bays to contain the grain being processed. The bays to the right and the left are storage mows for straw and hay. The first and second floors are joined by two "hay holes" through which hay and straw were dropped for use on the first floor. There is fully two-and-a-half stories of open storage space above the level of the second floor for piles of hay and straw. There are three built-in ladders doweled into the columns of the trusses to allow for access to the hay lofts. A five-bin granary can be found in the southwest corner. A track arrangement runs the full length of the inside peak of the barn to provide for movement of the hay and straw with a hay hook. The hardware on the barn doors is original. The barn doors have very long (about 5') iron strap hinges. The hinges on the smaller doors are curved on the anchor half, and are good examples of a type common to the area. The barn is also equipped with the simple clasp hardware commonly used on Pennsylvania German barns.

- b. Chicken and Brooder Houses: There are two chicken houses and a brooder house on the farm. The oldest chicken house lies about 100' southeast of the house, and is a frame structure, measuring about 26'-6" by 14'-6". It has a wood-shingle gable roof and is profusely fenestrated with one-over-one-light double hung sash windows. The second chicken house lies about 75' southeast of the first chicken house; it is a frame shed-roofed structure, measuring about 12' by 18'. It is set up on concrete piles made by filling wooden barrels with cement, and is of relatively recent origin. The brooder house is a round sheet metal structure and lies about 15' south of the second chicken house. This unusual structure has a segmented metal roof rising to a low peak marked by a metal ventilator.
- c. Corn Crib-Wagon Shed: This one-and-a-half-story gable-roofed structure lies about 200' southeast of the house and measures approximately 25'-6" by 22'. The frame construction is sheathed with vertical boarding.

There is a four-light single sash window in each gable to provide light and ventilation into the attic storage space. The drive-through type of corn crib has drying bins on each side and vehicle storage in the center.

- d. Butcher shed, Wash House, and Root Cellar: Just east of the house is a one-and-a-half-story gable-roofed structure, obviously built in two stages since the north end is wood, while the south end is stone. Entry to the north end of this building is through a wood door at about the midway point of the west (front) facade. This end has three double hung sash windows flanking the door to the north. A brick chimney can be found in the north end wall which vents a large iron butcher's stove. The roof is continuous over both sections of the building and is covered with mineral-surface asbestos shingles placed over wood shingles. The building measures about 26'-3" by 15'-3".

A root cellar is located under the stone end of this structure. A stone staircase leads down into this arched cavity which was used to store vegetables. The floor is brick in running bond. The masonry-arched ceiling is heavily plastered and whitewashed. The root cellar measures about 11' by 15', and is enclosed by a pair of slanting wood doors located a few feet to the south of the entry door into the Butcher Shed and Wash House.

- e. Summer Kitchen-Smokehouse: Just southeast of the house is a one-and-a-half-story structure measuring about 18'-3" by 16'-1". Built of randomly laid rough limestone, the building has a slate-covered gable roof. The west facade has a two-over-two-light, double hung sash window next to a paneled wood door. In the south end wall is a straight-run stairway to the attic as well as a large bakeoven. The remains of the back of the the bakeoven can be seen on the exterior of the south end wall. The floor of the first level is tongue and groove boards; the interior walls are plastered. There is extensive evidence that the attic of this structure was used for smoking meats.

- f. Pig Barn: The pig barn is a frame gable-roofed structure measuring about 20'-4" by 14'-3", about 60' south of the house. The wood-shingled roof over the main part of the structure is continuous over a pig pen on the west facade. Since the pig barn is built into a small embankment, the foundation on the downhill side is made of three masonry walls with the fourth side open.
- g. Privy: The privy lies a few feet southeast of the pig barn and measures about 5' by 5'. It is a gable-roofed, frame structure painted white and mounted on a concrete base.
- h. Double Garage: The double garage lies about 50' northwest of the house and measures about 20' by 20'. It is a frame gable-roofed structure built on a concrete slab. Entry is through a pair of sliding doors on the west end. There are two, two-light sash windows on each side wall. The building is painted a faded yellow.

Prepared by Thomas Kheel
Project Historian
Historic American Buildings
Survey
August, 1976

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Tulpehocken Creek Survey was undertaken in 1976 by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) and the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) in cooperation with the Philadelphia office of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in compliance with Executive Order 11593 as a mitigative effort in the construction of Blue Marsh Lake. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, and Kenneth L. Anderson, Principal Architect, the documentation was prepared on site by project supervisor Perry Benson (University of Pennsylvania); student architects Robert E. Clarke (University of Notre Dame), Gregory Lee Miller (University of Illinois), Robert Moje (University of Virginia), Daniel F. Clancy (University of Pennsylvania), and Steven M. Shapiro (University of Maryland); and HABS project historian Thomas H. Kheel (Cornell University) and HAER project historian Stuart Campbell (University of Delaware). The drawings were completed in the HABS office in 1977 and 1978 by Mr. Clarke and HABS architects Susan M. Dornbusch and Bethanie C. Grashof. The HABS data was edited for transmittal in 1980 by Alison K. Hoagland of the HABS staff.